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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/30/2029

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [CASC](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: FORMER NFIU DIRECTOR OKAURU HIRED AS
GOVERNORS FORUM DG

REF: A. 08LAGOS473

[1](#)B. 08ABUJA2350

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) Nigerian media reported on January 28 that former Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) Director, Ashishana Bayo Okauru (Amcit), has just accepted an appointment as of Director General of the influential Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF), chaired by Kwara State Governor, Bukola Saraki. On November 18, 2008, Okauru resigned from the NFIU Director position when it appeared EFCC Chair Farida Waziri was preparing to suspend him. In mid-January, Nigerian press reports claimed that Okauru was facing criminal charges for alleged national security violations. In discussions with PolOff and INLOff in December and January, Okauru (also American citizen) told us he was did not fear imminent arrest and that he chose to stay in Nigeria to seek employment. On January 27, NGF Chair and Kwara State Governor Abubakar Bukola Saraki told Ambassador that Okauru is not facing any charges, and said he saw Okauru's appointment as an opportunity to "clean the slate" regarding questions about his status.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) In a January 29 conversation, Presidency economist Sani Musa (strictly protect throughout) gave us a somewhat different take on Okauru's removal from NFIU than that we have heard previously (reftels) from Okauru and others. Musa said Okauru was not/not removed because Waziri was angry with him over remarks he made to USG officials, but did so on the direct order of Attorney General Aondoakaa. Musa claimed that Aondoakaa had advance warning that the GON was about to stop using its reserves to shore up the prevailing naira-to-dollar exchange rate (N117/\$1), which had persisted for the previous 18 months; the AG and some other insiders wanted time to shift naira denominated assets into hard currencies before the new GON laissez faire policy took effect and without close scrutiny from the NFIU. Musa noted that Okauru's resignation came only about 10 days before the naira's slide to a rate of about N150/\$1.

[1](#)3. (U) This cable was cleared by Consulate Lagos.

SANDERS